

Home delivery of alcohol expanded during pandemic, with permanent effects on health

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During the COVID-19 pandemic home liquor delivery soared in the

United States, as did binge drinking along with it, a new study finds.

"'Home delivery' refers to when restaurants, bars or retailers use their own employees or a third-party delivery system such as DoorDash or Uber Eats to deliver alcohol to consumers' homes," said researcher [Elyse Grossman](#), a social and behavioral sciences administrator at the U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse. "Although the number of states that allowed [home delivery](#) was already trending upwards during the last two decades, the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically increased these numbers."

Grossman's team analyzed legal databases and found that more states permitted home delivery during the pandemic. In January 2020, 21 states permitted home delivery of alcohol by retailers, which grew to 38 states by January 2022.

The number of states permitting home delivery of alcohol by restaurants or bars rose from 23 states to 39 states.

The [findings](#) were presented Tuesday at a meeting of the Research Society on Alcohol, in Bellevue, Wash.

"Although data from early in the pandemic showed large increases in [alcohol sales](#), it was unclear at that time if individuals were increasing their [alcohol consumption](#) or only stockpiling the alcohol," Grossman said in a meeting news release.

"In May 2020, we conducted an online survey of U.S. adults ages 21+ living throughout the country; the final sample included 838 participants," she said. "We found that, of the adults who obtained at least some of their alcohol via delivery, they reported consuming significantly more alcohol and binge drinking significantly more often than participants who did not obtain their alcohol through delivery."

Although many states expanded their home delivery laws as a way to help businesses, Grossman said few considered the potential consumer on public health.

"In the future, it is important that [public health](#) be given greater weight when states are considering [policy decisions](#) which increase access to alcohol," she said.

"Furthermore, although we did not examine youth drinking habits—given the increase in access to [alcohol](#) for youth via expanded home delivery laws, and the fact that retailers and third-party delivery drivers often do not check IDs—we hypothesize that youth drinking habits were probably also negatively impacted by expanded home delivery laws and strongly urge future research in this area," Grossman said.

Findings presented at medical meetings are considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

More information: The U.S. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism has more about [alcohol and health](#).

Speaker Abstract, *Alcohol: Clinical and Experimental Research* (2023). [DOI: 10.1111/acer.15069](https://doi.org/10.1111/acer.15069)

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